

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a patterned thin-film onto a substrate comprising the steps: [[-]]
 - i) plasma treating the substrate;
 - ii) Applying applying a liquid coating material, comprising one or more compounds selected from the group of organopolysiloxane polymers, organopolysiloxane oligomers, siloxane resins and polysilanes, onto the substrate surface[[,]] by a soft lithographic printing technique[[,]] to form a patterned thin-film thereon; and
 - iii) where required, removing residual liquid coating material from the substrate surface;
which process does not require the liquid coating material undergo a curing step.
2. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 1 wherein the resulting patterned thin-film has a thickness in the region of from 1 to 100 nm.
3. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 1 [[or 2]] wherein step (i) is carried out utilising a suitable source selected from the group of an atmospheric pressure glow discharge source, a dielectric barrier discharge (DBD) source, a low pressure glow discharge or post discharge plasma source, a corona discharge source and/or a microwave discharge source.
4. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with any preceding claim 1 wherein the substrate to be coated is selected from metals, metal foils metal oxides, glass, carbonaceous materials, ceramics, semiconductor materials, plastics, liquid crystals, polymeric silicon containing materials, cellulosic materials, laminates and/or photoresist materials.

5. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with ~~any preceding claim~~ claim 1 wherein the substrate is pre-treated.
6. (Original) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 5 comprising the step of pretreating the substrate by introducing an atomised liquid and/or solid coating-forming material into an atmospheric pressure plasma discharge and/or an ionised/excited gas stream resulting therefrom, and exposing the substrate to the atomised coating-forming material under conditions of atmospheric pressure.
7. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with ~~any preceding claim 1~~ wherein the liquid organopolysiloxane ~~polymer/oligomer~~ polymers/oligomers used in the process of the present invention may be any appropriate comprise a linear, branched or cyclic organopolysiloxane or copolymers thereof or a low molecular weight silicone resin in a liquid or wax form.
8. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 7 wherein the linear or branched organopolysiloxane ~~polymer/oligomer~~ has polymers/oligomers have a general formula:

W-A-W

where A is a polydiorganosiloxane chain having siloxane units of the formula $R''_sSiO_{4-s/2}$ in which each R'' independently represents an alkyl group having from 1 to 40 carbon atoms, an alkenyl group, hydrogen; an aryl group, a halide group, an alkoxy group, an epoxy group, an acryloxy group, or an alkylacryloxy group, ~~wherein any of the R'' groups may contain fluorine groups~~; s has a value of 0,1 or 2-groups; and

W is selected from $-Si(R'')_2X$, or

$-Si(R'')_2-(B)_d-R'''SiR''_k(X)_{3-k}$

where B is $-R''-(Si(R'')_2-O)_r-Si(R'')_2-$ and

~~R'' is as aforesaid, R'' is a divalent hydrocarbon group, r is zero a whole number between 1 and 6 and d is 0 or a whole number, most preferably d is 0, 1 or 2, X may be is the same as R'' or a hydrolysable group such as an alkoxy group containing alkyl groups having up to 6 carbon atoms, an epoxy group, [[or]] a methacryloxy group or a halide.~~

9. (Cancelled)
10. (Cancelled)
11. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim [[10]] 1 wherein the [[soft-lithographic]] soft lithographic printing technique is micro contact printing (μ CP).
12. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with ~~any preceding~~ claim 1 wherein subsequent to application of the liquid coating material, [[a]] the patterned thin-film on the substrate is at least partially further plasma treated and/or an additional coating is applied to form a second layer [[to]] on the patterned thin-film.
13. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with ~~any preceding~~ claim 1 wherein the method is carried out in a continuous process.
14. (Currently Amended) Use of a process method in accordance with ~~any preceding~~ claim 1 wherein the patterned thin-film is utilised to modify the surface alignment of a liquid crystal.

15. (Currently Amended) [[Use]] A method in accordance with claim 12 wherein the additional coating thin-film is applied to form the second layer using a soft lithographic printing technique.
16. (Currently Amended) Use of a process method in accordance with any preceding claim 1 wherein the patterned thin-film is utilised as hydrophobic tracks to control material placement during subsequent processes such as spin-coating and ink-jet printing processing.
17. (Cancelled)
18. (Currently Amended) A method for modifying the alignment of a liquid crystal comprising applying a thin film onto a substrate surface in accordance with any one of claims 1 to 13 claim 1 such that the alignment of [[a]] the liquid crystal is modified.
19. (Currently Amended) A substrate comprising a thin film applied in accordance with the method of any one of claims 1 to 13 claim 1.
20. (Currently Amended) A coated substrate obtainable by the method in accordance with any one of claims 1 to 13 claim 1.
21. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with any of claims 1 to 13 claim 1 wherein a region of the substrate surface is masked to substantially prevent or inhibit further physical or chemical changes to the previously uncoated, partially coated or fully coated substrate surface during a process step.